

REMARKS

Claims 1-14 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) over Mann. Apparently there is now no dispute that the Mann reference fails to show what Applicants have claimed and therefore the earlier §102(b) rejections have been withdrawn. However, Applicants respectfully assert that Mann does not suggest or motivate one with ordinary skill in the art to modify its disclosure to arrive at what Applicants have claimed. In fact, the office action contains no identification of what facts are supposedly of record that would motivate one with ordinary skill in the art to modify Mann in a way that would support the outstanding rejections.

Regarding claim 1, it specifically requires a center support with a filter head attachment and a bowl attachment adjacent opposite ends. In the disclosed embodiment, Applicants' claimed filter head attachment is a threaded attachment, whereas the bowl attachment is a keyed attachment. There should be no dispute that Webster's Collegiate Dictionary describes attachment as "the physical connection by which one thing is attached to another". Despite the characterizations in the office action, Mann plainly and explicitly teaches a center support 68 with no attachment features whatsoever. See column 2, lines 14-17 where it is made clear that the Mann center support is clamped between a manifold 12 and base 32 by a plurality of bolts 42. Applicants' claims clearly require that the center support has attachment features, not merely located near something that the claim limitation could be read onto. But Mann does not even teach head or bowl attachment features. The feature 28 identified in the office action as a "head attachment" is identified in Mann as an internal concave surface, and the bowl 32 only includes an attachment feature "threaded bosses 43", column 1, line 62, for mating to bolts 42, which are clearly something other than the thing 68 identified as Mann's center support. In the response to arguments section, the office action asserts that features 112 and 110 of the cited reference correspond to Applicants claimed head and bowl attachments. Applicants respectfully disagree, and assert that the reference itself does not support such a characterization. When one reviews the reference as a whole, it becomes clear that the Figure 4 embodiment is merely an inline alternative to the embodiment shown in Figure 2 such that features 110 and 112 correspond to the features of head 12 shown with regard to the embodiment of Figures 1 and 2. In other words, threads 110 and 112 can only be fairly interpreted in the context of the Mann reference as a

whole as being attachable to compressed air hoses in the same manner as threaded openings 20 and 30 in regard to the embodiment of Figures 1 and 2.

Applicants' claimed invention represents a patentable improvement over Mann since Applicants' claimed center support incorporates the fastening function of the Mann bolts into the center support itself. The MPEP, relevant case law, and the Board of Patent Appeals will not permit Mann to be so mischaracterized as to supposedly teach something it neither shows nor suggests. While it is true that a patent examiner can read claim language with extreme breadth, there is a limit that has been exceeded in this case. In other words, Applicants' claims can not be read both consistent with Applicants' specification, as required by the MPEP, and also read onto anything fairly taught by Mann. In particular, Mann flatly fails to teach a center support with head and bowl attachments at opposite end, as would be required in order for Applicants claims to be fairly read thereon. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the outstanding rejections against claim 1 and its dependent claims be withdrawn.

Claim 2 should be allowable over and above the reasons set forth with regard to claim 1 since it specifically requires that a bowl be attached to the bowl attachment of the center support, and that the bowl surround a metallic filter element. The Mann reference, on the other hand flatly fails to show a bowl surrounding a metallic filter element as required by Applicants claim 2. Therefore, the outstanding rejection against claim 2 should be withdrawn.

Claim 3 should be allowable over and above the reasons set forth with regard to claim 2 since, again, the office action does not even identify an annular seal between the bowl and anything identified as a filter head in the Mann reference. How can Applicants rebut something that is not even discussed in an office action? Applicants invite the Examiner to do the thorough review of the claim limitations, and examine the claim, and identify in the cited reference where Applicants' claimed features may be found, or withdraw their rejection.

With regard to claim 4, both the cited reference and the office action are silent as to Applicants' claimed feature. How could such a rejection be rebutted? It is flatly unfair to leave Applicants in the position of speculating as to where a claimed feature may be found in a cited reference. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the outstanding rejection against claim 4 and any claims that depend therefrom be withdrawn.

The office action is also silent as to Applicants' claimed hydrophobic coating on the metallic screen element, and required by claim 7. Therefore, Applicants respectfully invite the

Examiner to identify where the claimed features may be found, or withdraw the rejection. Mann teaches a device that encourages capture of liquid droplets in a stream of gas, which would appear to require something different than a hydrophobic coating.

Claim 8 should be allowable over and above the reasons set forth with regard to its base claim since it specifically requires that the bowl be in sealing contact with the filter head, but the office action does not even identify how this could be possible with the structure of Mann. Again, Applicants respectfully request that the features of Applicants' claimed invention be specifically identified in the cited reference, or the rejections should be withdrawn.

Applicants are utterly at a loss to figure out how the claimed plurality of engines of claim 9 can be read onto the airline vapor trap of Mann. But again, the office action is silent, and Applicants are left to speculate as to how an airline vapor trap can also be a plurality of engines. Therefore, Applicants again respectfully request that the claim be examined, and if there is a rejection to make, then Applicants claimed features should apparently be identified in the cited reference, or the rejection should be withdrawn.

Like claim 9, claims 10 and 11 were not even apparently examined, and therefore, Applicants have no utterance in the office action, and certainly there is none in the cited reference, that is capable of being rebutted. Therefore, Applicants again respectfully request that the claims be examined, and when this is done, it will become clear that Mann is incapable of anticipating the claimed subject matter of these claims, and it is only appropriate that the outstanding rejections be withdrawn. Claim 10 has been cancelled, and claims 9 and 11 have been amended to better express the subject matter being claimed. No additional fee is believed required, but the Commissioner is authorized to charge any underpayment or credit any overpayment to deposit account 500226.

With regard to claim 12, the Mann reference is inherently incapable of satisfying the claimed steps. In the first instance, the Mann center support is not attached to anything. It is held in place by bolts 42. The claim does not require that the center support be moved out of contact with something identified as a filter head, it requires that the two things be detached from one another, which inherently means that they were once attached to one another. The same reasoning also covers the relationship between the center support and the bowl. Next, where can Applicants' claimed washing step be found in the Mann reference? Again, Applicants

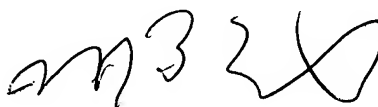
respectfully request that each and every feature of the claimed invention be identified or the rejections should be withdrawn.

Claim 13 should also be allowable over and above the reasons set forth with regard to claim 12 since the claimed steps are clearly not taught in the cited reference. There is also no inherent teaching in the cited reference that its "filter element" is ever even supposed to be cleaned. Instead, it is probably not even fair to characterize the Mann wire mesh as a filter; it is specifically taught as a means of coalescing oil and water vapor droplets, which is clearly an entirely different concept from trapping particulate matter in a fluid flowing through a filter as in Applicants' claimed invention.

Claim 14, like many of the other claims, was clearly not even examined as the cited reference to an airline vapor trap is clearly something other than a method of servicing a filtration portion of a fluid system for an engine. The cited reference is about coalescing oil and water vapor in compressed air in an airline application, whereas claim 14 is directed to a method of servicing a fluid system for an engine. The word "engine" does not even appear in either the office action or the cited reference, and therefore Applicants again are unfairly left to speculate as to how the cited reference could possibly anticipate Applicants' claimed subject matter. Again, Applicants respectfully request that the claim be examined and that the claimed features either be identified in the cited reference, or the rejection should be withdrawn.

This application is believed to be in condition for allowance of claims 1-9 and 11-14. However, if the Examiner believes that some additional clarification would put this application in even better condition for allowance, Applicants invite the Examiner to contact the undersigned attorney at (812) 333-5355 in order to hasten the prosecution this application.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MB McNeil", with a stylized flourish at the end.

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